

No 35

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Collinsiana Canadensis.

No 11. 1817

Peter Cadwallader

Peter Cadwallader

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Calligonum Canadensis,

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The subject which I have chosen for my Inaugural Dissertation, is the *Calligonum Canadensis*, generally known in this vicinity, by the name of Knot weed, because harpers eat the young shoots which come up in the spring before other vegetation is advanced. It is not unfrequently called by the names of Knot weed, & Knot root, on account of the peculiar structure of the root. It was well known to ^{Linnaeus} ~~Linnaeus~~, who gave it the Generic name it still retains, in honour of Peter Collinson, F.R.S. a very active promoter of Botanical studies; by whom it was introduced as the first species into the English Garden. It grows spontaneously in many, & perhaps in all parts of the United States; of this fact, however, I have not had an opportunity of making the necessary inquiry. But ^{have} satisfied myself, that it is a native of Pennsylvania. It is found growing in solitary places; in low & marshy grounds; in woody swamps, and along the fence rows of the adjacent fields. It can readily be distinguished from almost any other vegetable in its vicinity, by its leaves, which are broad & long, terminating in a blunt extremity, always situated on the top of the stalk, having no radical leaves, as well as by the stalk itself, which grows from two to six feet in height, and never more than one in a place.

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[Faint, mostly illegible handwriting in a cursive script, likely from the 18th or 19th century. The text appears to be a letter or a formal document.]

[Marginalia on the right side of the page, continuing the cursive script.]

The root is tuberous; its surface interspersed with numerous knots, from whence its name, somewhat resembling those found on the branches of the Oak tree, & requiring very considerable force to break them asunder, & when broken, the fibres are irregular, running in every direction. Its shape is long & irregularly round, having the stem shooting out obliquely from one extremity while to the other are attached its fibrous roots. It is most generally found on or near the surface of the ground.

The attention of Botanists has been particularly directed towards the flower of our present species of *Collinsonia*, in consequence of the Pistillum affording a curious & a very illustrative example of the amatorial sensibility of plants. It is observed that about the time the Pollen is in its most perfect state, & about to escape from the Anther, the stigma of the Pistillum is seen to move around & remain in contact with one of the anthers for some time; then to forsake its first love & solicit, by its movements, a similar connection with the other stamen, Dr Darwin depicts this well known fact in all the gaiety & voluptuousness of Poetry, in his *Loves of the Plants*.

Two brother growing of Colling gentle name
The game their feasting, their forms the game
With rival love for fair Collinsonia sigh
Kiss the dark bosom & roll the unsteady eye
With sweet concern the pitying beauty mowry
And soothly with mildly the jealous pair by turning

Two brother growing of Colling gentle name
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With rival love for fair Collinsonia sigh
Kiss the dark bosom & roll the unsteady eye
With sweet concern the pitying beauty mowry
And soothly with mildly the jealous pair by turning

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document or letter. The text is written in a dark ink on aged, slightly discolored paper. The handwriting is dense and fills most of the page, with some lines appearing slightly faded or less distinct than others. The script is characteristic of the 17th or 18th century.

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Botanical History

Collinsonia Canadensis belongs to the class
Dianthia & order Monogynia of the Sexual system of
Pinnacy, & natural order Labiate, of Ruppel's

Essential character of the Genus,

Collinsonia — Corolla unequally divided — The
lower lip being many cleft & appelling
filaments from two to four — Seeds four
enclosed in the persistent Calyx — one
only coming to perfection the other
three being constantly abortive —

Species Canadensis — Leaves — broadly ovate — inclining
to heart shaped — smooth — Teeth of
the Calyx short & oval shaped — Panicle
terminal & compound with oppos-
ite ramifications —

In addition it may be observed,

The root is a long irregular Tuber
& Perennial stem — sometimes almost
equaling the human stature —
Herbaceous — erect — quadrangular &
solid — Leaves about six inches long
opposite — uppermost ones on very
short footstalks — acute — bluntly
serrate & slightly wrinkled —

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Historical view of its properties.

There appears to be considerable difficulty in
tracing the *Collinsonia* back to its origin as a medicine.

The Physicians of America, who we are told,
went to the vegetable kingdom for the cure of all diseases,
to whom we are much indebted for the discovery of some
of our most valuable as well as active medicines, appear
to have been acquainted with its virtues.

A Decoction of the dried leaves, has been very
highly extolled by them for the cure of the male & the
female Venereal. A little more. But this is not
astonishing, since almost every plant of our Country,
whether active or inert, has in its turn, been designated
as possessing the same property. The *Collinsonia* ap-
pears at one time to have been much celebrated for the cure
of Hemorrhoids. It was used as an external applica-
tion in the following manner, by Friction with the leaves
immediately over the part affected, & continued until
irritation was produced, when the disease for a time
was suspended, & upon its return, the same mode
of treatment was again pursued, with the same suc-
cess. But this I think is by no means a fair trial
of the medicine, as it may be said that the same
benefit is to be derived from Friction, either with flannel
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with the hand, or with the Flesh Torch, as was
witnessed in the recovery of the ever-memorable Captain
Bish, while in the Island of St. Luke, & confirmed by
our long experience here, but the authority upon
which I most rely, is my Friend, to whom I am much
indebted for the information I have obtained, with
respect to its most interesting ^{medical} properties, as well as
its uses. - He tells me it was first used as a me-
dicine, by Doct. Josiah White, a self taught Physician
of Mount Holly, in New Jersey, in the year 1765 -
in the cases in which Doct. White used the Cattingum
was a want to its Diaphoretic effect, a property which
it possesses in a very great degree, In Intermittent
fevers, which was very prevalent in the neighbourhood
of Mount Holly, during the residence of Doct. White
in that place, whenever he found necessity for the
use of Diaphoretic medicine, the Cattingum was
always resorted to & not without answering his mo-
st sanguine expectations, in those states of the
Disease in which a determination to the skin was
indicated. - He employed it in preference to any
other Diaphoretic; accordingly his prescriptions
seldom or never failed of being answered with
success. And I have of no medicine better cal-
culated to

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to answer the indication for which it gave in
 in the first place, where the indication, as well as man-
 treatment, seem to be exactly made out, namely,
 that of producing a conscious determination to the
 surface of the body, when the Catarrh is when ex-
 cited in the proper Dose universally excited.
 There is another form of the Disease, to which the
 Catarrh is extremely well suited, viz, that when
 in we are prohibited from the use of Opium in conse-
 quence of the great degree of watchfulness which attends
 together with hot skin, & some degree of fever, which
 informs the Opium is universally known to increase;
 but a substitute I know of no medicine better calu-
 culated than the above, it excites a gentle motion
 in the surface of the body, counteracts the disease
 mutation, & by its benificent influence & timely
 administration, the patient is gradually relieved
 with regard to the propriety of using the Catarrh
 in the cure of Rheumatism, I think there can be but
 little doubt, as every Practitioner in medicine is
 aware of the great advantages which are to be
 derived from the use of Dover's powder in the cure
 of this most painfull & distressing Disease; when
 this medicine is not at hand, I presume to say no
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article of the materia medica, is better calculated
to supply its place; I might almost say, to replace
its use, particularly in Country practice; as
it can at all times be procured. It is universally
in vogue, & no one can refuse to take it, an accident,
& an disagreeable taste.

These are the advantages which have been derived
from it, & many more might be enumerated,
where the success of the practice has given credit to
the assertion, I am now then the following thing, in
their interesting nature, I shall not stir looking
upon consulting Dr Mead's Encyclopedia, a work
of great celebrity, that many venereal diseases
& Dropsy have been cured by an Infusion of the
root of Collinsonia in Tequila; an account of which
was communicated to the author by a Correspondent
Friend. This is another instance the main proposition
might be adduced in favour of its being added to
the Materia Medica, in the room of many out-
moded medicines, which now constitute a ~~great~~ portion
of that interesting branch of our Science, which
time & experience can only open to its pages.
Many active medicines have already been
discovered to be natives of our own Country, such
as, Sassafras, &c

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as Jabori &c. And the time is fast approaching
when the importation of foreign medicine will
cease, & through the instrumentality of the researches
of the ^{Genl.} Botanists, we shall be enabled to furnish
sufficient matter for an American materia medica,
the contents of which shall be of equal value with
the European.

It is hardly necessary for me to state again that
Micellinonnia is now called Diaphoretic; as this I
have already proved, upon the authority of Doct.
Wile, as well as that of my Friend, & it only remain
for me to say, of its Diaphoretic property, that it is
the root which is used in the following manner;
Dig. Take of the bruised root ʒij pour over it enough
of boiling water, let it stand for some time in
an earthen vessel, when it is to be boiled down to
a pint & straine off for use; The 2^d or a small
wine glass full when half hour, when you wish
Diaphoresis, & it's made of operation similar to
other Diaphoretics.

I come next to speak of its application
externally, in the cure of sore Legs. There is perhaps
no complaint to which the human body is more
more troublesome to the Physician, or more difficult of
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more than that of old ulcers on the Legg; for situated in that part of the body most remote from the source of circulation, & where the natural actions are carried on but feebly even in a state of health, when compared to other parts; when by accident or some other cause, these parts become the seat of Disease & new parts are to be formed nature is not sufficient for the performance of the task; her operations are continually impeded by the languid state of the veins above alluded to; then not having sufficient power to produce granulations, the Ulcerative process still increases. -

In this state of affairs, Surgeons are much divided in their practice: while one set contends against the Horizontal posture for any length of time in consequence of injury to the pleural Veath operating against the production of healthy granulations, others are busily engaged in furnishing arguments to prove that it is the only successful mode of treatment, but I do not think it necessary for me to enter here into any disquisition of ^{the} ~~the~~ contending parties have each their supporters. It would be taking up more time than can be allotted to an experimental Essay.

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I shall only therefore examine those principles which appear to me to be immediately connected with the subject.

In the first place in order to render our medicine as usefull as possible; it were well to follow, the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton, that we should distinguish the various Ulcers on the Leg into different kinds, as far as it is possible upon general principles; knowing which the Surgeon will be better enabled to treat the Ulcer; his subsequent labours will be much circumscribed, & he will only have to make trial untill he has found that medicine which is most applicable to the particular species of Ulcer under consideration, as well as a knowledge of the different medicines, suited to each species of Ulcer. It is also necessary to take notice of a fact in the treatment of Ulcers, which is confirmed by every Day's experience; viz, that the same application, however well it may agree at first, will, if used beyond a certain time lose its good effects, so that whenever we find an Ulcer to have become stationary, our only object will be to change our prescription for some other of similar power.

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The most common Ulcers which we are in the habit of seeing, are those which arise from local or Constitutional causes, and are denominated Indolent, & require in their cure either Constitutional or local remedies. It is in this species of Ulcer that the Collinsonia is particularly serviceable.

But before I proceed any further, I will state the circumstances which led me to the practice.

The recent leaves of the Collinsonia, when chewed, leave a lasting impression on the Tongue, slightly bitter, & very astringent; from which circumstance, I was induced to use it in the following cases;

Case 1st A middle aged German was received into the Almshouse in July, 1816, with an Ulcer extending from his ankle about half way up his leg, with thick prominent edges, in both directions, the granulations of a glossy & greyish appearance, together with considerable inflammation around the edges of the Ulcer; in this situation he had been for the greatest part of the Summer. After bleeding & using the various means for counteracting inflammation Caustic was applied to the edges of the sore &

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The son, with a bread & milk poultice, to be continued until I should see him again; when I found him in a situation fit for the Decoction, which was made by taking a handful of the recent leaves, adding to them a quart of boiling water, to be boiled down to a pint, with which the Ulcer was washed three or four times a day for a week; at the end of which, it began to put on the appearance of an healthy Ulcer, & by the end of two weeks it began to ~~circumference~~ ^{circumference} gradually decrease that of a Polypus; I continued its use until it was perfectly cured.

Case 3^d, Mr. J. Whynan received a bruise on his shin in April, 1786, which at first did not communicate inflammation, but blood being coagulated ~~underneath~~ the cellular membrane, as the consequence, at the end of two weeks, an Ulcer was formed about an inch in Diameter, which resisted every application, as it appeared to get worse every day; About two months after the accident I saw him, at which time he was much alarmed; from the state in which I saw it, as well as from the long time it had existed, I was induced to believe

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that the Ulcer was prevented from healing, by some local cause, operating against the production of healthy granulations, as his general health was very good; I now had him bled & purged, & ordered him a low diet together with a free use of the Decoction of the Collinsonia: he was well pleased with the medicine & in the course of ten Days from its first application, it was perfectly well & still continuing so—

It is an observation somewhere to be met with, & very applicable in the present instance, that one well attested case establishes a truth as incontrovertibly as a thousand equally avowed. With this view of the subject, I have only to state while on the subject of Indolent Ulcer, that during the last summer I had an opportunity of seeing twenty or thirty cases of Ulcer, & in all of them I have used the Collinsonia with decided advantage, & in many of them no other medicine; I have never failed of effecting a cure. But before I close my account of Collinsonia, I think it proper to state the decided advantages which were derived from the use of the medicine in the cure of two or three cases of Agedematous Ulcer, which fell under my care during the last summer. They were the following—

Case 1st An old Black Man had for some time been troubled with swellings of the lower extremities, Ulcers now began to appear on his Legs, while the swelling of the other almost entirely disappeared; They exhibited the following.

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following appearances, viz, purplish spots on the anterior part
of the leg, which sooner or later, ulcerated ^{with} considerable inflam-
mation, particularly when sloughing took place, together with
great pain & uneasiness in the part ulcerated. I was prevented
from the use of antiphlogistic treatment in consequence of gene-
ral debility. The bandage was repeated, but without any good
effect. I was now resolved to try the Collinsonia, having witnessed
much benefit from it in the preceding form of Ulcer; I ordered
the leg to be washed with a very strong Decoction of the recent
leaves, three times a day, & to continue the bandage at a mod-
erate pressure; this practice was strictly pursued in for the
short space of two weeks; the sores began to heal kindly, from
which time he gradually recovered & is now able to do a
good day's work. Some other cases were treated in a
similar manner with the Collinsonia, but considering
them so nearly like that I have already described, it appears
unnecessary to repeat them here. I am not alone in my
experiments on the Collinsonia in the cure of Ulcers, sev-
eral of my medical friends have been as successful as
myself, & all agree in saying they have never used any
medicine, with the exception of which they have better
pleased, with than that of the Collinsonia.

I close my observations on this medicine
with one remark which is, that if I have not added
one tittle to the list of cures, one consolation is
left me, that I have taken nothing from them.

Finis —